: Marshall M-5 (ca. 1910) 1945 AP1 Burma
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on the mountain side. Everything but the largest trees would be cut in the cool season of January or February and left to dry until just before the rains began in May. Then it would be set on fire. Precautions were taken to keep the fires from spreading to the neighbouring dry forest, but these were often futile and vast areas were frequently ablaze for days until the rains would put out the fires. In this way large quantities of forest containing valuable timber would be sacrificed for a small quantity of rice. The burning would leave a deposit of ash that would act as a fertilizer for the rice to be planted. It would also kill the seeds of weeds and trees and give the rice a chance to get a start over the more vigorous growth of native plants.

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Karen girl carrying bamboo water pots

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On the plains they used buffaloes and oxen to plough when the rains had covered the ground with a few inches of water. The flowers of the pyinma tree that comes out just before the work begins with the coming of the rains is called *P'Nah Haw* meaning "the buffalo weeps", for they say that when the buffalo sees this tree in bloom he weeps because he knows that he must soon begin ploughing.

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graph.[14] In the early days when white men were still a strange sight to the people, they would beat their breasts and call their "k' las" to come back, evidently fearing that the latter would follow in curiosity after the strangers. A friend of mine had a similar experience among the Karen of Siam only a few years ago.

The people think that a wandering "k'la" may remain invisible or assume the form of the person himself. Stories are told of these wandering ghosts. A man who had been absent from his village met the apparition of his wife on his way home. It informed him that it was going to see its mother, but it consented to spend the night with him in the jungle. As they had no food, the ghost, which was supposed by the man to be his wife in person, went back to their house and took what food it wanted from the cooking pots, without revealing itself at all. Next morning the man and his ghostly wife took their separate paths, the former being greatly shocked on arriving in the village to find the burial rites of his wife in progress. Realizing that it was his wife's "k'la" which he had met in the jungle, he wished that he had called it back. Another story relates that a husband was so incensed at seeing his wife (the apparition being really her "k'la") wandering abroad that he struck her in the face. This act had the desired effect, for the "k' la" hastened back to its deserted body and thereby put an abrupt end to the funeral ceremonies, which were already in progress. This wandering propensity of the "k'la" leads to other complications than those already mentioned. The elders are authority for the statement that even though a couple are living together as man and wife, their "k' las" may form unions with those of other persons, especially during the hours of sleep. Even the efforts of a necromancer to summon the wandering "k' la" of a sick person may result in attracting the "k' la" of some other person to occupy the deserted body, in whose behalf the efforts are being put forth. The new occupant may remain only while generous offerings are made to it, and the sick person is sure to experience a serious relapse when it leaves.

It seems to be believed also that the "k' las" of human beings may take on other forms, such as those of insects. Animals have "k' las" which can do the same thing. Sometimes when moths are

[14] Sir J. G. Frazer quotes Dr. Nieuwenhuis, who tells of a similar experience among the people of Borneo: *Golden Bough*, Vol. III, p. 99. Some of the Karen object to having their photographs taken on account of their fear of sympathetic magic, that is, they fear that an accident to the photograph would cause a similar one to the original.

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flying about a light people say: "Let the 'k' las" of beasts and other creatures fall into the flame, but let the 'k' las' of men fly carefully and save themselves."

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Inanimate objects have their "k' las," as well as the lower creatures. Ownership in such possessions is duly observed by killing the pigs and fowls of a woman when she dies. The remains are thrown away or given to foreigners, who do not share the superstitions of the Karen. The paddy-cleaning implements and clothing of the deceased are either burned or buried with the corpse, unless they are laid on top of her grave. In like manner the oxen belonging to a man who has died are killed and disposed of, while his personal effects are burned or put in the grave with him. Otherwise, the owner's "k' la" might return to the village for his property and thereby bring calamity on the inhabitants.

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The idea seems to prevail among the Karen that the "k' las" enter and leave their bodies through the fontanel on the top of the head. In case a child falls and cries the mother will blow on this spot, in order to keep the life principle from escaping. However, the customary method of preventing the escape of the "k' la" is to tie a string around the wrists, either one or both of them, after fanning up the arms to blow the "k' la" back. Anybody may perform this act, but the services of elders or necromancers ("wi") are preferred.

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Another conception of the "k' la," quite distinct from that set forth above, is that it is a seven-fold spirit inhabiting the body, whose death it is constantly striving to accomplish through one or another of seven methods, namely, insanity, licentiousness, epilepsy, oppression, diseases, accidents, and injury by wild beasts. Even from the birth of a person the seven-fold "k' la" accepts the responsibility of causing his or her death and is engaged in constant struggle with that person's "so" (personality or character) for the mastery. As long as the "so" is strong, it serves as the individual's guardian angel; and he remains immune both from the attacks of the seven-fold "k' la" and from the magic arts of witches and necromancers. However powerful the charm that may be employed against him, his dominating "so" will ward it off; but if his "so" should become weak, he will soon lose his immunity.[15]

[15] See Dr. J. Wade's account in *The Karen Thesaurus*, new ed., Vol. I, pp. 488, ff.

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kind, involving the use of certain rites, practices, and conceptions by which one tries to protect one's self against unknown powers and forces. White magic may be divided in turn into three varieties, namely, defensive, productive, and prognostic magic.

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As suggested by its name, defensive magic is employed to safeguard one from injury and to prolong one's life. Charms are used, such as the wild boar's tusk without a nerve cavity, to prevent the possessor from being wounded by the firing of a gun or the bolt from a crossbow. The tusk charm is called "soh."

The boar's tusk must be the tusk of an old and fierce animal (for the older the animal, the smaller the cavity), which was, therefore, hard to kill. This, according to Karen belief, renders its owner equally hard to destroy. Sometimes the tooth of an ancestor is worn, in order to gain the reputed courage and strength of the latter. A female wears such a charm around her neck. A man may wear it set in a finger-ring. The latter method of wearing the tooth would not serve in the case of a woman or giri, for unavoidably it would be brought in contact with her skirt and that would be disrespectful to the dead, thus destroying the value of the charm. A lock of hair or the parings of nails from a corpse are also frequently worn to prolong the life of the wearer.

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A certain plant of magic power, called "k' thi baw tho" or "tiger medicine" is said by the Karen to confer such immunity upon him who uses it that he may enter a den of fierce tigers at any time without the least fear.[4] It is also reported that by burying the root of this magic plant at the bottom of a hole seven cubits deep, pulling the root up with one's teeth, and jumping out—according to one of my informants—even when men are standing around the opening with sticks in their hands, one will be turned into a man-eating tiger and spend the remainder of his life in the jungle composing verses and springing down upon unwary persons. Certainly, one who can believe that a man can leap out of so deep a hole and dodge the blows of his fellows at the top, will experience no difficulty in believing the rest of this story.

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A second form of white magic is what is defined as productive magic. It has to do with increasing a crop, rendering a family prosperous, or adding children to the family circle. Certain plants of the ginger family *(Zingiberaceae)* growing in Burma are supposed to be endowed with the power of bringing a good crop production. Consequently, they are set out at the entrances of the

[4] *Karen Thesaurus*, new ed., Vol. I, pp. 643, ff.